THE MATABELE AT HOME

By

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PREFACE.

The Matabele have no history in the accepted sense of the word. Various and more or less conflicting accounts have been given from time to time by old natives of their wanderings from Zululand, nearly a hundred years ago, to the territory which is now Rhodesia. The early missionaries who penetrated into the Northern parts of South Africa in the beginning of the nineteenth century have placed on record the most important facts connected with the Matabele migration, and to their works the reader may be referred for the only reliable information upon the subject.

The following pages are intended to furnish a short description of the natives of Matabeleland as they present themselves to one who has observed them closely and, as he hopes, fairly for many years. The two articles on their customs and religion were read before the Rhodesia Scientific Association, by whose kind permission they are now published here. The last chapter has been added to give the reader some idea of how the native, the man himself, appears to those who have known him long and well.

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The practice of carrying all burdens on the head tends to an upright carriage, and the physical development of the women is generally good.

P.N.

I

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE MATABELE

A KNOWLEDGE of the manners and customs of a backward race is admittedly essential to the gauging of its status or stage in the scale of social evolution. " Manners make the man " is a proverb trite but true. To understand the ways of a people is to understand the people themselves. Such knowledge, however, is not acquired in a day. Long experience through close contact with the African natives and a complete mastery of their language are necessary to apprehend their habits of thought and general outlook, as expressed in their provokingly tricky and elliptical forms of speech.

Like all other Bantu tribes, most of the social observances of the Matabele people are connected with and symbolical of that side of their life which is purely sexual, and therefore do not admit of adequate description outside a medical or legal inquiry. It is no exaggeration to say that if the elements of sexuality and witchcraft be eliminated from a discussion on native customs, the remainder will prove to be proportionately slight indeed.

The habits here described are those generally met with in this country to-day, but it must be understood that

there is considerable variety. As a matter of fact, each little tribe has its own peculiar traditions, often unknown to the members of the neighbouring ones.

The customs of the Matabele proper are fairly stereotyped throughout Matabeleland, but the country contains a large number of other natives of various origin, most of whom speak the Sindebele language, while they follow, more or less strictly, their own tribal practices.

To begin at the beginning. With the Matabele, children are always welcome; they are regarded as a real and not as a mixed blessing. The question of "woman's sphere," of which so much is heard nowadays amongst white people, has not as yet presented itself here. The native woman—that is to say, the raw Kaffir woman—untouched by civilisation, looks upon child-bearing as her proper and natural occupation, and would be shocked to hear that some of her white sisters think differently. The deadliest insult that can be levelled at a Kaffir woman is to call her an "inyumbakazi," that is, "barren," and this epithet is therefore generally reserved by the women themselves for occasions when it is felt that something more than ordinary abuse is required.

It is the woman who bears the burden of the child's upbringing, alone and unassisted, and bears it cheerfully. No doubt the absence of clothes and of school make that burden a light one compared to that of the average white woman; but, nevertheless, it is the woman who does what work there is to be done in this respect, as in nearly

everything else connected with the home. The father's responsibility, even where the children attend school, is practically nil. The tuition provided is generally free of charge. The well-meaning Europeans, who take upon themselves the educating of the rising native generation, have no compunction in giving freely to the often opulent native that which many struggling whites find it hard to pay for.

The customs attending the severing and preservation of the umbilical cord, and the birth of the child generally, vary a good deal amongst the different clans. A knowledge of these is often of value in deciding questions of parentage, but a detailed description is obviously impossible here.

The quaint custom, almost universal in South Africa, of presenting the new-born child to the new moon is also followed in this country. The infant is lifted up facing the new moon, and the traditional words " Nangu o wenu "—there is your brother—are pronounced amidst much pleasantry and mutual congratulations among the parents and the assembled friends. There are some enthusiasts who, with more imagination than is strictly necessary for the interpretation of these things, have seen in this observance an analogy to the Christian rite of baptism. No doubt the followers of the Crescent in the north of Africa would also recognise here a remnant of the law of " the faithful."

The new moon is always hailed by shouting the word

" Koliwe," probably a shortening of the words " si koliwe," we are gratified, pleased. A genuine expression of pleasure at the reappearance of that kindly orb that means so much to people who have no other lamp.

The naming of the child is always a matter for much discussion, and often the source of lively disputes within the family circle. Sometimes the child is given a name commemorating some event that took place at or near its birth, such as " Undhlala," from the word meaning hunger or famine ; " Undabambi," sorrow or bad tidings ; " Unjini," in imitation of the English word " engine," and so forth. For the rest names are taken from any common object, and a great many are met with, the meaning of which, like many European names, it is impossible to trace.

The process of teething is nearly always attended with trouble of some kind or other in the system of the infant. The gums are rubbed with charred wood, and the child is treated with more than usual indulgence during this awkward period. When it happened that the top teeth of a child, reversing the natural order of things, appeared before the lower ones, the child was either killed or sent away to grow up with some family of " amahole," or slaves dependent upon the father, the reason being their superstition that such a child would be a danger to the other children in the kraal. The reason generally given may have been started by some wag long ago, and it is to the effect that crocodiles acquire their top teeth first,

It is the women who do the work at home. The water often has to be carried a long way. It is never stored. The distance which the wives and girls have to travel daily to fetch this water is seldom taken into consideration when the kraal site is fixed, but the women do not complain.

and that a child presenting this abnormality would in all probability grow up to resemble that animal also in being addicted to bite. Others say that by allowing such a child to live the mother would run the risk of having no more healthy children, the evil influence of the abnormal one being here psychic, *i.e.* exerted without contact. The parents therefore, with characteristic carefulness for their own sakes, disposed of the child in the way mentioned. The killing of such children is even now occasionally heard of, but evidence sufficient to lead to conviction is seldom obtainable.

There were some among the Matabele who shared the almost universal aversion, in Africa, to twins. One of the two children was left to starve to death, or was not allowed to continue its breathing by the orthodox midwife in attendance. This practice was referred to euphemistically by saying, "lendisiwe," it has been married off, if it was a girl, and if a boy, it was said, "la swela," by which it was understood that it had been quietly smothered. The body was generally buried close to the hut inside the kraal fence (egumeni), and it was customary to place the survivor, when sick and crying, upon the grave of its little sister or brother "to soothe its pain and stop its crying."

The Amakalanga even nowadays kill, not only one, but both twins, usually by piercing the brain with a needle through the fontanel immediately after birth. The fact that twins are not looked upon as being ordinary

human beings is shown by the Matabele in not allowing any mourning for the one that dies. Similarly, some of the Zulus did not " lila " or wail for one who had died from consumption. Twins are also credited with a power of healing any one suffering from a stiff neck by merely touching or twisting that part of the body.

Likewise with cripples (umhlolo wezilima). A seriously deformed child was taken away from its kraal and placed on the ground close to a goat which was made fast to a tree, so as to attract by its bleating the prowling hyenas, thereby saving the parents themselves from performing an unpleasant, but, as they considered, necessary duty.

Apart from the reason which the natives give for all their customs " our fathers always did so," there would seem to be an idea prevalent that of twins one is always weaker than the other, and that therefore it is better to destroy the weakling at the beginning than to let it linger on. The more rational practice of killing deformed children is justified as being " a putting away " of an unnatural thing, and a prevention of the propagation of deformity. It is generally admitted that congenital malformation is exceedingly rare amongst the natives.

Circumcision, with all its attendant rites, as practised by the Basuto and several Coast tribes, is unknown among the Matabele, but a form thereof called " ukupendhla " still survives in some places. Whatever may have been the original reason or sanction for this custom it is not

now known by the natives, but explanations are sometimes offered which, however, are too utterly foolish to merit attention.

Living as they do in the open air in the daytime, and cuddling close to their mothers at night in huts where, there being but one doorway and no windows, draughty winds cannot enter, the children grow up and thrive, resembling the lilies of the field, if not in their colour, then in their freedom from all care without either spinning or toil or irksome lessons.

The mother's milk at first, and afterwards finely ground Kaffir corn and sour milk, form the child's diet; and were it not for the total lack of sanitation and the astonishing ignorance and carelessness of the mothers in dealing with children's ailments, the rate of infant mortality would be very much lower than it appears to be.

Nursery rhymes and fairy-tales abound, and allowing for difference in localities and surroundings, form the exact counterpart of the more primitive of our own children's stories. The themes of these vary but slightly amongst the different Bantu people. Take as a specimen of the former the following sung by the mother as she rocks her body with her baby on her back:

Ola, Ola, Ola, mtwana,
Unyoko ka limanga,
U be sa libelez' intwala,
A ku la'mpi a ngeyi qede,
U se za qoqela amatshe
A pek' utshwala obukulu, etc., etc.

Which may be translated:

> Hush, hush, my baby,
> Thy mother has not finished
> Her hoeing,
> Cleaning thy head has delayed her,
> But she will do her work in time.
> (Lit. there is no army she could not conquer.
> And she is going to cook a lot of beer.)

It is in the evenings, after the manner of all the world, in the summer time outside, and in the colder season inside the huts round the fire that the mothers beguile their children with weird and wonderful tales of birds, beasts and little children, and of giants and giant-killers, raising many childish questions, some of which may be answered, but many more not.

Games of a haphazard and unorganised nature are the order of the day among the children in the kraal, but games of skill and according to set rules, and trials of strength or speed in running are seldom seen. What matters it to the native boy if his brother or friend can run faster than he? The idea of training himself and of exercising his muscles so as to be able to beat the other's performance never enters his head. That fierce desire to be first, that lust of excelling, which makes the European schoolboy strain and struggle in the contests of other lands till his little heart almost breaks with the exertion is not to be found amongst the Kaffir boys in their homes. They will wrestle, fight and chase one another, but not as if they cared much who becomes the winner,

The boys in the kraals have no form of organised sport or play. They fight, chase each other, and ride their father's calves, but never by way of competing or racing for a fixed prize or goal.

and it is this lack of will and of concentration of purpose which characterises the native from his birth to his grave and keeps him where he is.

The childhood pure and innocent of our children of tender age is of necessity impossible amongst the natives. Things which are hidden from white children by their anxious parents are, if noticed at all by the natives, in their free and naked kraal life, referred to by way of joke and banter, and therefore, though innocence there may not be, neither is there to be found among their growing boys and girls that hyper-sensitive imagination which, stimulated by concealment, grows sickly and colours many things, in themselves good and natural, so that they appear to be sinful and wicked.

The arrival at puberty, which among Europeans is left to be surmised by the parents or teachers without any special notice being taken thereof, is with the natives regarded as one of the most important physical functions of their whole existence, and, as such, is given a prominence which to white people seems strangely disproportionate. Nowadays, the boy who enters upon the stage of youth is not asked to go through all those rigorous trials of hardihood and endurance that were deemed necessary for a fighting race of a generation ago, but even now in the kraals, away from towns and mines, certain practices are still kept up which have for their object the strengthening of the will to resist pain and the learning how to endure in silence.

Upon the first appearance of puberty the boy goes naked to the usual bathing-place in the nearest river, and there performs his ablutions early in the morning before anyone else is awake. (Ukutshaywa lizibuko.)[1] On returning to the kraal the boy does not go back to his hut, but remains outside close to the kraal gate. Though the morning air may be shrewd enough to make all the other inmates of the kraal crowd round their fires huddled in their blankets, he must needs remain where he is, shivering and naked. On seeing him there, the other boys fall to and belabour him with their sticks, which treatment he is supposed to submit to with stoical indifference. During the following three or four days he lives in the veldt, shunning other people, but watched by other boys, who prevent him from drinking any water or eating any food. When at last he returns to his home, famished and miserable, the local doctor is ready to complete the period of probation by administering to him a decoction of noisome and unnamable things called medicines, some of which are mixed with his food. This thoroughly medicated meal is then given to the boy, who, however, is not allowed to help himself with his fingers. The thick, solid lumps of porridge are stuck on the end of a stick, and are studded with many small sharp thorns and thrust at the victim by the doctor. As the starving boy

[1] The interpretation put upon this expression in Colenso's *Zulu Dictionary*, viz. "to be struck by the mirror," is, in my opinion, at fault. The "izibuko" here referred to is the fording place in the river where the people usually bathe, and the word "ukutshaywa" means the shock from the cold water in the early morning before the sun is up.

attempts to grab the food with his teeth the doctor prods him in the mouth, to the great amusement of the interested onlookers. The boy, desperate with hunger, seizes what and when he can, regardless of thorns or medicines, and is not supposed to show any resentment or self-pity. At the end of this exhibition of manly forbearance and indifference to trifles, the doctor administers, by way of a final blessing, as it were, three or four smart blows with a stick upon the body of the long-suffering youth, and tells him that he may now consider himself on the way to becoming a man. " Kwenzelwe uba a qine," it was said, *i.e.* it was done to make him hard.

At this time the uncles or other male relatives often give presents to the boy of small stock, which is regarded as a nucleus for further acquisition. (Ukukunga.)

The custom of " ukudunduzela," which is the publication of the beginning of womanhood, is still kept up by some of the natives in Matabeleland. The relatives, friends and neighbours assemble at the girl's home on a given day. Meat is provided by her father, according to his means, and Kaffir beer is supplied and consumed in what to a European would seem alarming quantities. A veritable bacchanal is generally the result. After the manner of the Greeks of old, when similar orgies were indulged in, the company give themselves over to the wildest ribaldry, and shame and decency are set aside for the time being. The songs and dances peculiar to this custom are too obscene to allow of description. The

young people of both sexes equally abandon themselves to the time-honoured demands of the occasion, and afterwards as naturally drop back into their wonted way of everyday life.

Speaking generally, the passion of love is, with the natives, a matter of sex and of sex only, unaffected and unrelieved by any of the finer feelings of admiration or chivalry which have sweetened and tempered the sexual relations of other races for ages past. Chastity, as understood amongst white people, is unknown here. The lover is supposed to pursue the object of his desire very much after the manner of the beasts of the field. The girl, by simulating fear and flight, stimulates the man to continue his pursuit, and this seems the only remnant of a more developed sense of morality lost long ago, for it is usually deemed improper for a woman to yield to the overtures of a man without at least the semblance of struggle. It follows from what has been said that the crime of rape was almost unknown among them before the advent of the white man, because, forsooth, the act itself was considered a natural and not a criminal one—unless, indeed, it was a "hole" or slave who laid hold of a woman of a superior class. The very language itself, although replete with expressions denoting every single aspect of their sexual life, does not contain an equivalent for the English "to ravish," for the very good reason that the need for such a word has only recently occurred. (The nearest verb in Sindebele is "ukudhlova.")

The period of courtship varies according to circumstances. There are no special ceremonies celebrating the espousal. " Child marriages " are common among the Amakalanga, but not among the Matabele. Intercourse of a kind called " ukuxaba," or more politely, " ukudhlala," is frequently allowed before marriage. When once the girl has " chosen " her lover she no longer affects any shyness. On the contrary, she often goes off at night to the kraal of her young man, returning to her own in the morning. Presents are made by the girl to her lover, consisting generally of bead necklaces, followed by gifts of limbo, a shawl and a blanket from the young man to her. The father's consent is essential, and the freewill of the girl herself is also now assured by declaration before the proper government officials. Then in due course of time the wedding " umtimba " is held.

On a certain day fixed by the bride, without consulting the bridegroom, but upon which he is known to be at home, the bride, accompanied by a number of women friends, and also some of the men of her kraal, set out together to that of her husband to be. Arriving there, they halt outside the gate, and when asked by those inside what they have come for, one of the company replies, " Si ze ku dinga inkonzo," which may be translated, " We have come to render allegiance," to which the answer fixed by custom is chanted by one of those inside, " A si la nkonzo, a si la nkomo, si nga bayanga, tina si fuye izinja lezi ezi ti : hu, hu, hu, lamagundwane

la ati : nsi, nsi, nsi," which is to say, " We have no means, we have no cattle, we are but poor people, we have only dogs which bark, saying, hu, hu, hu, and mice that squeak nsi, nsi, nsi." The spokesman of the girl's party then delivers the traditional message from her father, stipulating for her good entreatment by the husband, who replies as before that he is extremely poor and needy, which statement, being generally fictitious, is simply meant to show becoming modesty on his part.

The company then enter the kraal with a show of violence. Payments have to be made by the bridegroom to the bridal party to persuade (nxusa) them to pass the inner cattle kraal gate, and again to make them sit down. In former times the wedding lasted for several days with feasting and dancing, but nowadays only a few, the more wealthy natives, persist in keeping up this old-time merry-making. On the second day a goat is killed for the men who came with the bride, and they turn back. The next day more goats are killed for the party itself, the meat is usually eaten at the nearest river. In the afternoon the people return to the kraal for what is called " ukume-keza," that is, the wedding dance, which they go through with zest. Towards sunset the bride is supposed to run away, and to make it appear as if she were hiding herself. Search is made ; she is found and brought home amidst shouting and singing.

Upon the return of the search party, the bride is shut up in her new hut. Thereupon the custom called " uku-

donsa ezamasi " is honoured by the young men, who now, one and all, fall upon the girls assembled, in the style of the historical rape of the Sabines. Each man secures the girl most suited to his fancy, and literally carries her off into the veldt away from the kraal. The resistance of the girls here, however, is merely by way of show. The custom is too ancient to be departed from now. Should there be one who felt like complaining to her parents, these would soon convince her of her folly and order her to go back to the man she ran away from.

The bride, during the dancing, is always more or less veiled, and is shielded with amusing ostentation from the bridegroom's view. The following morning the guests leave, with the exception of the " sonyongwane," who is the chief girl friend of the bride, and who is supposed to remain with her for some time after the wedding, for the purpose of helping her with her new household duties. When, afterwards, the bride's hair is shorn, leaving the " isicolo," or topknot, as a sign of her rank as a married woman, this friend also departs for her home.

The " amalobolo " consist in the goats, sheep or cattle, or their value in money, given by the husband to his wife's father as payment for her, and also as a kind of security assuring his good treatment of her in that she is of actual value, as well as being in the nature of a guarantee for her proper conduct after marriage, seeing that the stock given must be refunded by the father in case of the wife's failure, through misconduct or desertion,

to bear children for the husband. Formerly these payments were often delayed till after the birth of the first child, but now they are supposed to be made before the marriage is celebrated. The number of animals, or the amount of their value, varies according to the rank of the woman ; a couple of cows or ten head of sheep is the usual price.

Polygamy, which is no doubt declining, is still generally looked upon as the proper form of marriage, especially by the women. The first wife, by reason of being the first, has certain privileges, the chief of which is that she need not work as hard as those who afterwards join the household. Moreover, the more wives there are the less work there is for each one to do, and anything which is calculated to lessen the great evil work is always keenly appreciated by the natives. Jealousy between the wives is not often met with. The husband may with impunity follow his own bent and make love to as many unmarried girls as he likes, without any risk of causing jealousy amongst his wives. The women, as a rule, as soon as they begin to settle down in their new homes, seem to give up their former habits of cleanliness and become dirty and utterly indifferent to their own appearance.

It is generally supposed that the rate of infant mortality is a very high one, but as reliable statistics on this subject are not available, it is impossible to be certain of this. The artificial limitation of the family is, and has always been, an accepted desideratum amongst the natives. As

The carrying capacity of the women is considerable, and they bear their burdens cheerfully.

a general rule the matter is so regulated that the number of children born by the average Kaffir woman is seldom more than four. A married woman with two children, with less than three years between their respective ages, is seldom met with.

Marriage within the prohibited degree of relationship or incest (uku xwala), as with Europeans, was always looked upon as a grave offence not to be tolerated.

The " umholo we mwisana " of the Amakalanga has never been generally adopted by the Matabele, but is still practised by many of the former, who speak the latter's language. It is a custom resembling that of the " seignorial rights " of feudal times, and it consists here in this that the man whose son is about to marry takes into his household the woman chosen, where she remains till a child is born, after which she is transferred to the son. This curious custom may perhaps in some way be connected with that known as " ukwambula umlobokazi " amongst the Zulus, which is the giving of a goat by the husband's father to the daughter-in-law, " to uncover " her, so that she need not observe the usual restrictions otherwise binding upon her in his presence.

Widows are not supposed to marry again till they have been medicinally treated or cured by a doctor who specialises in such matters.

The life in the kraals generally is made up of a great deal of idling and a very little work. Even what work there is to be done, such as tilling the soil and harvesting

the crops, is generally carried on in a way calculated not to overstrain the workers. Beer, the great panacea for all evils, the chief of which is work, is always brewed in sufficient quantities to ensure the assistance in hoeing and weeding of the neighbours who, in their turn, must provide the same means for their own necessities. In witnessing these co-operative efforts of agriculture, nothing is so striking as the smallness of the work performed in contrast to the excessive amounts of beer consumed, and the great noise generated in the process.

The feast of first-fruits (ukucinsa) is now in disuse. Depending, as it did, so entirely upon the " royal " element, it naturally passed away therewith.

What is known as " ukwetekela " also deserves notice. Young men are supposed to make lengthy visits to their distant relatives, and to assist these in what work in the way of hoeing and such like there is to be done, while he makes the best use of his opportunities for meeting and courting the young ladies in the locality.

The practice of " ukungena," which prescribes that a man whose elder brother dies leaving a widow or widows may take unto himself these women as his wives, is still followed amongst these people to a certain extent. This custom does not seem to have for its reason the same principle as that of its Mosaic counterpart, which placed upon the survivor the duty of " raising up seed " for his dead brother, because with these people the man is sup-

posed to take over the women even when there are children alive, in the same way as he takes over other property of the deceased. The object appears to be rather the consolidation of the family by keeping the children together while growing up in the one kraal.

Those natives who style themselves " abaka Mambu," who were in occupation of the country before the arrival of the Matabele, follow the practice of " ukungena," even where a father dies leaving a widow without children. The woman is taken over by the son, if he is grown up, and becomes his wife.

Some observers have recorded it as their impression that the natives are a polite people, and in many ways more punctilious than are, for instance, the English. It will be nearer the truth to say that their politeness is of quite a different order to that observed amongst the white nations of the North.

Neither the ethic nor the aesthetic sense is wanting here. It is the ways in which they find their manifestations that differ so signally from European habits. That faculty or perception which selects certain conduct as proper and polite, while it sanctions the opposite as being improper and rude, is fully developed amongst the natives. The variance occurs only in the classification. The underlying idea is the same. For instance, the polite native sits down in the presence of his superior, whereas the white man is supposed to stand. And again, the native leaves the hut where he had been entertained by turning his

back upon those inside, to show that he is not afraid of being stabbed as he does so, whereas the polite European is taught to do exactly the reverse in order to show respect to his host and the other guests.

The native visitor at a kraal is generally sure of moderate hospitality, provided he belongs to the same tribe as the occupiers. If he is a stranger from another country he is looked upon as an " umufo," that is, an enemy. (Curiously enough this word, like its Latin equivalent " hostis," is capable of two meanings: " Umfo ka bani," means " son of so-and-so," and it also means a stranger from another tribe, viz. an enemy.) The spread of civilisation, especially through the increased facility of communication provided by the many railways, has already to a certain extent broken down a good deal of this primitive inter-tribal animosity, but still the natives, as a whole, regard those of their own colour from other parts, and of different speech, with more suspicion than they feel towards the ruling class of the whites.

Now time, which by most Europeans is considered of some value, is to the native a mere inoperative abstraction, except when he happens to be working for a " baas." Then, indeed, he soon becomes a very ready reckoner, with a marked tendency to be always in advance of the true expiry of his contract, with his request for wages not yet due. The short, sharp way the white men have of greeting one another strikes the natives as unseemly hasty and unduly abrupt. There is always plenty of

time at home to observe the customary deliberation. The visitor, having put down his sticks by the gate, advances with becoming slowness into the circle of the kraal and sits down in silence. The inmates, squatting in groups under the eaves, then one by one address him with the traditional " sakubona," to which he replies to each in turn, " Eh ngi ya ni bona," " I see you," that is to say, " How do you do ? " Conversation then begins generally by asking the new-comer point-blank where he has come from, and where he is going. If these personal inquiries are pursued no further, it is not from considerations of privacy, but simply because the wanderer is seldom credited with any other than the well-known object of slacking a perennial thirst with Kaffir beer, or perhaps the equally universal quest of the eligible and acceptable member of the opposite sex. In the vicinity of the towns the practice of selling beer instead of, as before, giving it to the guests bidden and otherwise is steadily growing. The sale of the woman to the highest bidder, which was the rule of old, on the other hand, is being replaced more and more by a form of marriage, old, no doubt, but not hitherto considered reputable, and one requiring no " lobola " or other ceremony, and terminable simply by the will of the parties.

That form of politeness which the accepted canons of propriety prescribe amongst white people all over the world is practically unknown amongst the natives. Men, women and children discuss with equal frankness the

physiological details of everyday life. Mothers may often be heard to make use of the foulest epithets in scolding their own children, and this habit is not confined to any section but is general, there being no "classes" as amongst the whites, with their different degrees of education and culture.

In other ways, however, the natives are often extravagantly polite. The ostentatious show of respect reciprocated between the son-in-law and his wife's mother is very striking. The practice of "ukuhlonipa" is also current here amongst the married women chiefly. They are required to make use of a large vocabulary of so-called women's words, for the purpose of avoiding the mentioning of any word containing the radical of the name of her father-in-law, his brothers and wives. In her actions also the married woman is expected to show respect for the persons mentioned by covering the breast in their presence, and refraining from looking at them, as well as from eating any food near them.

Love of ceremonial is a well-known characteristic of all primitive people. The Matabele have many little customs that serve as evidence, as it were, of the happening and genuineness of certain events. When, for instance, two men after a period of enmity are eventually reconciled, the fact is attested by both partaking of a preparation of wood ashes taken from the fireplaces of their respective kraals and mixed in water, and as they spit out the unsavory mixture, so, it is understood, do they also cast

forth the spirit of animosity (ijoyi) by which they swore when first they quarrelled.

It were easy to continue the recital of many similar observances amongst these people. It is only natural that where there is no need for hurry, no " business," and no competition of any kind, circumstantial ceremonies serve as welcome diversion from the dullness of everyday life.

The very old people amongst the Matabele, though not as a rule subjected to actual ill-treatment, are generally treated with scant courtesy. Cases of parricide are heard of occasionally, but sufficient evidence to lead to conviction is, in the nature of things, practically unobtainable.

Suicide is fairly common. Old people often make an end of themselves when, decrepitude having preceded senility, they find life too troublesome a burden. Girls when " crossed in love " also have been known to kill themselves, the act, in the cases I have known, being, in my opinion, prompted more by a spirit of stubborn contrariness than by feelings of devotion and grief.

The only time when the Matabele may be seen in something like a hurry when at home, away from the stimulating presence of the white man, is when a funeral takes place. On such occasions unusual alacrity is often displayed. Unlike some other native tribes, the Matabele do not break the bones of the dead. The corpse is placed in a round hole some distance from the kraal, and nowadays as a rule only the dead man's blankets, and perhaps

a dish or two, are buried with it. The reason for making the body in the grave face East, which is generally done, is no longer known to the natives. After the burial the parties concerned used to submit to certain medicinal treatment, and to wash themselves thoroughly by way of purification. Mourning, in the form of wailing by elderly women, who display astonishing energy and lung power when thus engaged, is still kept up more or less, as well as " ukuzila," that is, abstinence from all work and certain kinds of food for a short period. The departed himself is seldom discussed afterwards. When the head of the kraal, if a " Kumalo," *i.e.* of royal blood, dies, the body is usually buried close to his hut inside the fence, because, as they say, " the kraal is still his, and we call it after him." Afterwards the kraal is removed to another site. The graves are generally covered with stones and thorns, so that no one shall walk thereover, but the grave itself is never tended or otherwise remembered.

The mounds of stones, so often seen near well-beaten native paths, generally near the top of a rise in the ground, do not, as might be surmised, denote the grave of anyone, but are simply collections of stones thrown by passers-by " for luck." " Isivivane " is the Zulu word for such a heap, but in Matabeleland no commonly understood name seems to exist therefor.[1] Explanations of the origin of these heaps vary, but generally concur in assigning a reason which can hardly be stated here.

[1] The Amakalanga call such a heap " sisingasinga."

The deceased is seldom spoken of. His name may not be mentioned perhaps till a year or so after his death, when a stray snake (umhlwazi), as these creatures often do, finds its way into one of the huts of the kraal wherein he lived, and is recognised and hailed by one of the initiated as the "idhlozi" of the departed, come to remind the living of the dead.

I have refrained from touching upon those customs, which may, in a sense, be regarded as the Native Common Law, because in order to deal with these more space would be required than is possible here. Moreover, the laws, so called, of the Matabele proper are the laws which they brought with them from the South, and are conveniently codified in a statute passed by the Natal Legislature in 1891. No doubt many deviations have been made from these in this country through the influence of the Kalanga element, and, as a matter of fact, to-day each man is largely a law unto himself, seeing that the only regulations that are properly sanctioned and enforced are those framed by the whites—regulations that affect chiefly the natives' relations with Europeans, leaving their home life practically unprovided for in this respect.

Black magic, in the fullest sense of that word, forms a very considerable chapter of native life. The words "ukuqonela," "ukuposa," "inyatelo," and so forth, denote a kind of occult lore with which the more knowing ones are for ever filling the ears of their simple fellows, who always constitute the great majority. The imme-

diate effect of the inculcation of European education and religion has not tended to lessen, but rather to increase the gullibility of the natives in this respect. Those natives from Natal and Zululand who have recently settled in this country are obsessed in a much greater degree than the indigenous inhabitants with this mass of childish superstitions, and this in spite of having been in contact with civilisation for a very much longer period. Indeed, the list of magic philtres to be used as love charms and as protection from all kinds of evil influences has been very largely extended by the inclusion of a great number of materials and medicines provided by European commerce. The weirder the better would seem to be the rule of these magic prescriptions. I have heard of an aphrodisiac, said to be exceedingly powerful, in which the ingredients consist of common washing-soda mixed with fat, together with the heart of a cock dove dried and pulverised ! The combinations of the wonder-working substances are as varied as they are impossible and absurd.

These superstitions which, in spite of their absurdity, exercise a great deal of influence over the bulk of the natives are not dispelled in a day, nor yet in a century. Craven fear and suspicion, the twin causes of senseless superstition and wicked witchcraft, are devils that can only be exorcised by the " bell, book and candle " of gradual enlightenment and slow-growing civilisation.

Again, I would point out that I have dealt here with things as they are now, not as they were in the past.

From the antiquarian's point of view the past, of course, is far more interesting than the present, but for the average white man who comes into daily contact with the natives a knowledge of their ways and habits in their present stage of transition from savagery to we know not what, is sometimes of practical importance.

When, as I have said, that side of the natives' lives which is dominated by witchcraft and permeated with sexuality, naked and unashamed, is withdrawn from view there is comparatively little left that is worth setting down in writing. Wherefore the paucity of this contribution is easily understood.

Such is the position to-day, but it was not always so. Less than a hundred years ago the aboriginals of South Africa roamed unhindered over the hills and plains that now are resounding with the noises of the restless white man's many activities, but savages though they were, it is a mistake to suppose, as so many have done, that theirs was a lazy, languid, lotus-eating existence midst palms and plenty. On the contrary, before the advent of the white man, the Kaffir lived a hard, hazardous life, full of danger and excitement. The males during boyhood and youth were put under discipline, crude and spartan-like, but very effective in training a man for what were then his chief occupations, hunting and war. The women tilled the soil and bore the children, and the weaklings amongst them of necessity went to the wall. And so they lived, each little tribe welded and bonded together

by the sympathy that is born of common action, through common need, crude but virile, and though civilisation, in the proper sense of the word, there was none, there was the national life, without which no social progress has ever been recorded.

But now the old order has changed and has given place to the new. Now the horizon of the Kaffir's mental vision is bounded on all sides by dull work and duller idleness. If he leaves his kraal to seek employment, either in town or mines, he finds himself hedged round with a thousand irksome restrictions; he cannot move without a pass, he cannot get drunk and shout and dance when he feels so inclined; he cannot even indulge his inherited fighting proclivities to the extent of crossing sticks now and then with a passing stranger from another tribe, without breaking one or other of those numberless joy-killing statutes under which the dread policeman has the power to hale him into the local court of summary jurisdiction.

If he remains at home, he is no better off. He is no longer allowed to vary the monotony of his drab surroundings by hunting either big or small game as did his fathers before him, for the law says he must not carry arms. Even at the beer-drinks, the last relic of the old life, he must not as of yore drink full and deep, lest in the excitement of the hour, and while emphasising a point in debate, he should chance to break a pate or two, a matter which the white man takes most seriously.

How often have I not heard the wail: "Ah! yes, then we were men in our own right, we had something to live for. Our king was the flame of fire, guiding and protecting us, and when needful burning out the wicked ones amongst us. Now we are like the drifting locusts, without a king, driven willy-nilly by every wind that blows. Then when we died, we died on the appointed day of death, often on the joyous fields of battle, now we die every day; for are we not daily humbled by our masters in many ways. There is nothing left worth living for, better far to have perished like men than to grow fat like dogs on the white man's crumbs and offal."

This is, of course, the wail of the Matabele, the erstwhile conquerors of these territories. The other natives, the "Amahole," as they are called, themselves admit that they have gained materially on every hand, but, nevertheless, although now they live in safety whereas then they were hunted and despoiled, their lives now are dull and devoid of interest, lacking in all those things which give zest to existence. They have neither the industrial competition and international rivalry, so keenly felt amongst the white races all round the world, nor the raiding and counter-raiding that made up and coloured their lives in those days. Being thus bereft of all their old accustomed forms of excitement, which to a native who has but a small inner fund of mental wealth to draw upon, is the very breath of his nostrils, deprived to a great extent of his liberty, a hewer of wood and a drawer

of water where he once went freely, without personal ambition or national aspirations, is it to be wondered at that ever and anon, when fanned by favourable winds of misunderstood religion and misapplied education, the smouldering embers of sullen discontent break out into fierce flames of open rebellion ?

Hard work, the panacea for all evils, with which the masters have always been ready to cure the ills of their slaves, good as it is for whites as well as for blacks, is not enough in itself to keep men alive. Civilised life is made up of three things—Work, Worry, and Play. Of these a Kaffir is allowed a fair share of the first. Of the second he knows nought, his labour being always in demand and his wants being as yet well within the reach of his earning powers ; he is unconscious of those worries and struggles to make both ends meet which occupy the minds of nine-tenths of his white brothers wherever they are serving as a spur to effort, dispelling sloth and boredom. As to the third, that also is lacking. Organised play and recreation the natives have never known, but war and the chase kept both mind and body healthy in the past.

It will be for those entrusted with the guidance of the natives in the future to devise such means as shall serve as substitutes for the things that are lost, and help to guide the course of native progress along lines parallel to, though not necessarily identical with, those of our own national life and civilisation.

Education is the blessed word on the lips of many.

But while some hold that this must be given apart from and uninfluenced by missionary enterprise, others again maintain that religion is the only power that will prevent the white man's education from leading to the native's future deterioration, wherefore we may well be warned in this connection in the quaint words of Thomasius, from " sending our sickle into the fields of dread theology."

Sport, that undefinable factor in furthering European individual and social health, ought not to be withheld from the natives. On Empire Day, for instance, a fine opportunity would be afforded the natives of South Africa of assembling near the chief towns, and by games or dancing and other organised display and demonstration, be allowed to express their loyalty to the Crown, the while they enjoy the exhilaration of healthy and manly games. Absolute segregation and a policy of *laisser-faire* may appear to some the best native policy, but they should not forget the old adage, " Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," remembering always that there are eight millions potential mischief-makers in South Africa as against a million of the little white leaven which leaveneth the whole. Work, therefore, in itself is not enough, the requisite amount of worry will come when their wants begin to increase, but play, sport, a little recreation of a national character they certainly ought to have, for we cannot deny the truth of the old saw, " That all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

II

THE RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF THE MATABELE

In estimating the degree of mentality of savage tribes, it is of the greatest importance to avoid alike the rose-coloured spectacles of the over-sympathetic enthusiast and the doubt-clouded outlook of the confirmed cynic.

There is an anecdote which illustrates very clearly how easy it is to err on either side. An Anglo-Indian sportsman of the more militant type, was once asked if, during his long sojourn in India, he had ever met with a true native Christian. His answer was a prompt and decided negative. A missionary who was present then ventured to ask him if he had ever, while in that country, seen a Bengal tiger, and the gallant colonel at once replied that he had not only seen a good many, but had also " bagged " some of these ferocious animals, whereupon the gentle missionary retorted, that although he had spent many years in India he had never seen a single tiger there, but that he had met a number of real native Christians, his explanation of the matter being, that while the other had been hunting tigers, he had been on the lookout for Christians.

The moral of the story is obvious. In Africa we often

meet the fervent missionary who sees evidences of his own noble faith wherever he goes, and we meet also, far more often indeed, the cold old colonist, to whom all Kaffirs are but as the beasts in the field. Take as an example of the former, the Reverend David Clement Scott, who, in the preface to his *Manganja Dictionary*, bursts forth into rhapsodies, in which he speaks of that language as having " the fullest expression of the abstract " one has yet met with, and as being " the witness of a perfect incarnation," and so on. It is clear that these are the ebullitions of a rapt enthusiast, rather than representations of actual fact.

But equally dangerous, on the other hand, is the attitude of those students who refuse to believe in the existence of things that cannot be felt and nailed down, as it were, to their own particular frame of mind. These are they who say, that where the language of a people does not contain certain words denoting ideas of an abstract and lofty nature, then the total absence of those ideas must be taken for granted. As if the fact, that in several European languages no exact equivalent for such words as our " home " and " gentleman " can be found, would justify even the most patriotic of self-satisfied Englishmen in thinking that the institution of the home, and the type known as the gentleman, were blessings exclusively peculiar to his own island.

It behoves us, therefore, to " gang warily " when forming our conclusions as to what the natives of this

country believe and hold to, to exercise a wise discretion when accepting and rejecting the many suggestions that crowd in upon us, as we proceed with our studies of a people who, though now sitting in darkness, may yet be capable of seeing and benefiting by the light that in the fulness of time shall light the whole world.

Bearing this warning in mind, we may now pass on to consider the subject before us, namely: The Religious Ideas of the Matabele.

Whether the Zulu people, from whom the Matabele separated in the early part of last century, ever possessed a system of mythology, after the manner of the ancient Scandinavians and other kindred European barbarians whom they so strongly resembled in national character, is extremely doubtful. Whether, in other words, the stage of religious development at which they were discovered to western civilisation, is one attained in retrogression from a nobler form of religion, or in an upward progress towards a higher level, it is as yet impossible to decide.

Though it is now generally held that the word " Unkulunkulu," the literal meaning of which undoubtedly is " the Great, Great One," denotes only the first ancestor, the old man of each clan or family, there are reasons for reverting to the original view which was, that the word signified the only Great One, from whom came all things and all men. The adjective " kulu " means great, and in a secondary sense, old; the word " dala " also

means old, and derivatively when used as a verb, " ukudala," to make, to create. From this the idea follows easily that the great old man was also the creator of all things, because primitive man has always, wherever found, exhibited that strongest of intellectual tendencies, the anthropomorphic. If man is a mystery to himself, external nature is a still greater mystery to him, and he explains the more by the less obscure. In the same way as he knows himself to be the maker of his own rude implements, so, he muses, must the world around him have been made by someone, a human being, no doubt, but an old, old man, and therefore a very wise man of long, long ago.

The step between the idea of an old wise man, wise enough to make this world, and that of a being dwelling above and beyond all human kind, that is a God, had not yet been made by the Zulus when the first missionaries entered their territory. They were a barbarous and strictly military people and they had neither time nor inclination to ponder long over natural phenomena and their hidden causes. Their lives were made up of fighting and feasting, whereas the meek and mild Amakalanga whom they conquered and despoiled, being anything but a fighting race, held notions of a comparatively speaking high order, concerning a single Supreme Being, whom they regarded as the creator and sustainer of all things. But even among these practical materialists, now called the Matabele, there were some few of the more thoughtful

ones, if we may believe what their sons now tell us, who ever and anon were heard to declare that there was a Maker or Fashioner (Umbumbi) living somewhere either above or below this world, but these statements of belief never took much hold upon the people, and when given utterance to, it was generally done facetiously, as it were, as if the speaker felt how futile it was to worry about things which cannot be seen.

We may take it, therefore, that the idea of a Creator, Originator, or Fashioner was not quite lacking, but it must be admitted that the conception of a Supreme Being which still governs with his own laws the destiny of the world he made, is entirely absent. The old, old man of the Zulu myth, who made the earth and the people upon it, retired into impenetrable seclusion and well-earned rest after he had finished his labours, and has not been heard of since.

As has so often happened in history before, so in this case, the Zulu invaders fell to great extent under the mental influence of the conquered people, and when the first white people entered these parts, they found the Matabele rapidly acquiring the more developed ideas of the original inhabitants.

Now, before entering upon a description of the religion of these natives, it would seem well, if possible, to define the word religion itself. But when it is remembered that up to the present no single definition has been condescended upon, as satisfying the demands of the great thinkers of

all ages, it will be seen that the task is one which we need not be blamed for shrinking from here. It will be sufficient to say simply, that religion is the facing of the unknown which has been accomplished in as many different ways, almost, as there are different people, ever since man began to think.

As we proceed with this discussion, we shall see that a great many of the fundamental elements of our present highly developed religious system, find their counterparts in the loose and ill-defined beliefs of the people of this country.

When Matthew Arnold sums up religion as being "morality touched by emotion," he is contemplating a form thereof, far higher and nobler than the number of shadowy notions and practices that, taken together, make up the religious system, if system it can be called, of the people we are now considering. "Morality touched by fear" would seem to come nearer the mark, because it is fear that furnishes the chief factor in everything that can be set down as being of religion with the Matabele, as we know them. It is fear, but not fear of the consequences of transgressing the beneficent laws of a just God, rather is it the crude unreasoning fear of some angry and jealous being, capable of doing him harm, which prompts the native's mind to fashion the ideas of which we find him possessed.

Emotion, as apart from the purely physical parental or sexual feelings of love and passion, and such other

physical sensations as are called up by dancing and great noise, which often take the form of hysterical fits of frenzy, is with these people almost an unknown quantity. The sense of awe experienced at the contemplation of the immensity of the universe, the feeling of admiration evoked by beholding the beauty of form and colour in a glorious view of scenery, the exaltation engendered by listening to solemn and sacred music, are all as yet far beyond the Tebele's mental limit.

When the first missionaries came into Matabeleland, the word "Umlimo," which is of Sesuto origin, was in common use among the Matabele, and it signified a supernatural being whom they were then beginning to think of as the creator and upholder of the world around us, and who was all-powerful in the matter of the regulation of the annual rainfall. This Umlimo was approached by the king's authority through his chosen priests and priestesses (Ziwosana), who were always members of some Kalanga tribe and who were accepted as the media and mouthpieces of the Umlimo himself. Before the occupation by the white people of this country, it had become customary for many of the Matabele to go to the Umlimo's cave, wherever this might happen to be, at regular intervals, and there to make obeisance by presenting the Umlimo with cattle and beer. More especially was he sought when droughts threatened to destroy the crops; then the people of the affected districts, with the king's consent, sent messengers with black oxen, together with

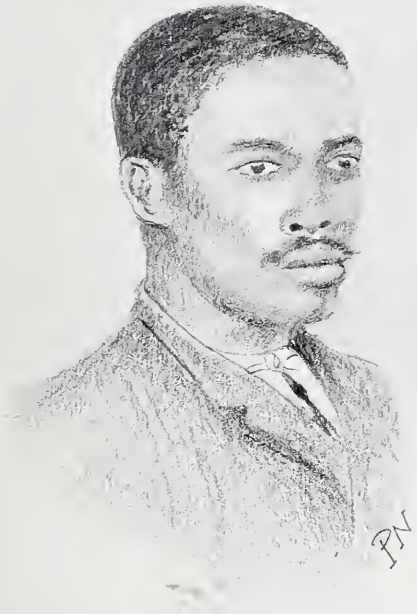
girls carrying beer, to the Umlimo at his place in the rocky fastnesses of the Matopo Hills, where these gifts were received by the "Ziwosana," and the messengers were promised or refused the required rain, according to whether the people had, or had not, remembered him in the time of plenty. There are those who say that the king himself did once or twice send a deputation of his own to ask for rain, while others, the conservative aristocrats, "Abenzansi," as they loved to call themselves, indignantly deny the suggestion that their mighty king, so terrible and strong, should ever have admitted the existence in his own land of any power equal to or greater than his own. Be this as it may, the bulk of the people were beginning to pin their faith, more and more, in the Umlimo as a being above and beyond all earthly estate. The ceremony on these occasions consisted chiefly in depositing the beer brought in vessels outside the Umlimo's stockade, and then withdrawing to a respectful distance from the holy place, when after much hand-clapping, the spokesman would lift up his voice, praising the Umlimo as the Creator and Ruler of all things, and praying to him to send the longed-for rain. Then the priest would make answer after a suitable interval that the messengers might go in peace, and that the Umlimo, having received their presents, would at the proper time grant their prayers, by causing the stubborn clouds to yield their precious burden.

The Umlimo was not approached in cases of sickness.

The " Amadhlozi " or spirits of the departed were considered responsible for diseases which resisted the power of the native doctors' peculiar pharmacopœia, and were, and are still, invoked to heal the afflicted ones. This Umlimo, or as the Amakalanga called him, " Umwali," or " Mwari," could not be seen by any man. His cave or temple might be fixed at certain spots for the purposes of worship, but he himself appeared only in the lightning and in shooting stars which, when observed, were hailed with shouts of acclamation and praise such as these: " Tobela ! Tobela ! Tobela ! Mwali u no pinda " (bow down and humble thyself, God is passing by). Their faith in this Umlimo, who was held to be the helper of his own, the black people, was no doubt shaken when the white people took over, and remained in the country, and they explain their difficulty now as best they can by saying, " He has gone away, he lives elsewhere now," and sometimes the words are added, wistfully, as it were, " He may come again some day." The desire to localise, as it were, the grace and blessing of this God of rain, is shown in the building of little huts, here and there on lonely hillsides, in which food and drink might nearly always be found placed ready for him from whom cometh the life-giving rain, the rain that in the native's mind stands as an all-sufficient boon for the manifold blessings for which the priests of other faiths are bidden to pray.

This meat and drink, though holy in the sense that it is not intended for consumption by those who put it

This sketch shows the higher type of Matabele native, a "Zansi" or descendant of the original Zulus. The square forehead denotes considerable cranial capacity. The natives of this class are usually bright and intelligent.



there, might be taken by passing travellers, and this is often done. These,when pressed by hunger, were allowed to enter the closed hut and partake of the food they found there. The grateful wanderers would clap their hands softly, saying, "Mlimo, Baba Mkulu," before and after the meal. A very real way of showing gratitude surely, though the actual words, "We thank Thee," were not spoken. This gracious custom, amidst so much that is harsh and savage, recalls the old story cited by Christ against his critics, the Pharisees, of how David and his men, when they had need, went into the House of God and did eat the shewbread, which it were not lawful otherwise to eat. It will be seen, therefore, that the Matabele, as coming under the influence of the Amakalanga, whom they subjugated, cannot be classed as "endemical atheists," as some of the tribes living south of these territories have been described.

Apart from the "zinyanga zokubula," or "zamatambo," or so-called diviners, no priesthood after the style, for instance, of that which flourished under judaism and kindred systems, was known to either the Zulus or the Matabele. As among the early Romans, where the paterfamilias himself officiated as the priest of the family and attended to its "lares and penates," so with these people it was the head of the kraal or family who offered up the prayers and sacrifices to the spirits of his ancestors. It was not until the Matabele had become firmly established in these parts that the cult of the "Ziwosana," of whom

mention has already been made, began. These people, who were always, and still are, referred to as " Abantwana baka Mlimo," took upon themselves to represent the congregation, as it were, to the giver of rain, and the procedure or ritual adopted is sufficiently singular to merit a few words of description.

At the not infrequent prayer meetings for rain, as these gatherings might well be called, it often happened that when the " Iwosana " was dancing his wildest and the singing and hand-clapping of the assembled throng at its noisiest height, one or two of those present would be seized as with a fit or trance. First, the muscles of the body would stiffen to cramp-like rigidity, and then relax in jerk-like movements, the subject then jumping and tumbling about in a fearsome manner, utterly regardless of his surroundings or his own safety. Tales are told of the most wonderful feats of acrobatic agility that would put to shame the most modern travelling circus. The ordinary Kaffir hut was easily surmounted in their wild leaps, and altogether their performances are said to have been marvellous. From the appearance they presented when the fit first seized them, they were said to be " bound," and that by the Umlimo himself.

The curious association between bodily movement, be it dancing or shaking or jerking of the body, is a well-known concomitant with a great many varieties of so-called religions. There are the Spinning Dervishes of the East, for instance, of great antiquity, and the modern

" Shakers " among the sect-ridden half-educated Americans of to-day.

The " Ziwosana " were never approached in case of sickness. Their function was to draw near to the Umlimo and pray for rain on behalf of the inhabitants of the drought-affected districts.

The story goes that when, some 30 years ago, this body of priests and priestesses appeared to Lo Bengula to be on the point of becoming dangerous to the state by reason of their growing importance, he had them destroyed in a day. But they did not all perish, and before the occupation by the whites of this country they were again beginning to assert themselves, and the part they played in the subsequent rebellion proves that their power and influence was not overrated. Even nowadays these people are heard of. It is in times of drought that instances of resuscitation of the old faith may be expected to occur.

The old time-worn question, " when a man dieth shall he live again ? " has always received a more or less affirmative answer from all the religions of mankind, and the natives' belief in " Amatongo " (ghosts), " Amadhlozi " (ancestral spirits) and other emanations from the grave, shows that here also the idea of immortality has begun to grow in that of the continuance of some form of life after death. The system of ancestor worship which the Matabele brought along from the south, when shorn of all its redundancies, amounts to this. When a

man dies his " Idhlozi " or self in course of time suspires from the grave, assuming the form of one of three common kinds of snake, usually in that of the " Inyandezulu," and is then believed to exercise his powers for good or evil, but mostly for evil, by afflicting his relatives and children with various kinds of disease. When pressed for an explanation as to whether the " Idhlozi " lives in a man while still alive as his spirit or soul, the natives admit that they do not know, while some hazard the opinion that the body itself after death undergoes a metamorphosis, resulting in its reappearance in that of a snake. Others again say the snakes are the " Izitunywa " or messengers of the departed, but when asked where the departed people themselves now are, they can only shake their heads and answer " No one knows."

The principle that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins is recognised in this crude belief, if by the word " sin " we mean neglect of the memory of the departed ancestors, as well as sickness sent by these in punishment thereof. Sacrifices to appease the wrath of these " Amadhlozi " have always and are still being offered of cattle or goats and of libations of beer, according to rank and wealth. The invocation or prayer in use when these sacrifices are made is generally in the nature of a more or less improvised harangue, in which the " Idhlozi " is asked to abstain from further afflicting the supplicant's children, winding up with the offer of the slaughtered beast and an expression to the effect

that the spirit ought now surely to be satisfied for some time to come. The difference in the tone of the speaker when he addresses these spirits and when he prays for the mercy of the Umlimo is very striking. In the former case he adopts a chiding half-truculent style, whereas in the latter his attitude is that of the humble and lowly applicant for favours. Though we may call what has been described here ancestor worship, it cannot, of course, be compared with other forms thereof obtaining elsewhere, such as, for instance, that of the Japanese, who think of their ancestors not as malignant and spiteful beings constantly seeking to annoy their descendants on earth, but as spirits ever ready with their blessing to help and encourage their virtuous children, and through whose glorious deeds in the past those now living derive strength and merit. A beautiful conception like this is as yet too high for the native's imagination. As has been said before, fear of evil, not fear of the evil results of violating the laws of a benign deity, but fear of evil itself, is the prime motive of all that goes to make up the so-called ancestor-worship of the Matabele. Sometimes, nevertheless, signs are met with showing the incipient growth of a feeling of reverence, as apart from fear alone, in phrases such as this: "Si yo pata ibizo lika Baba," we go to mention, that is to commemorate the name of our father, when speaking of a forthcoming invocation of the ancestral spirits. But it must be admitted that the ceremony thus referred to is generally gone through for the purpose of averting or

removing some actual or anticipated evil by way of propitiating the spirit whose name is called upon. Instances no doubt occur where the natural desire for a feast of meat is gratified by the killing of a beast or goat, ostensibly for the "Amadhlozi," but in reality to furnish variety in the normal vegetarian diet. But such instances prove nothing, and may be likened to the occasional abuse by some of the early Christians of the sacred love feasts against which practice the Apostle so sternly warned his followers.

The sacrifice of the slaughtered animal, as has been said, means the spilling of blood by which the evil that has caused the sickness which baffles the herbalist's skill is to be removed. The words "hlambuluka" and "hlaula" are the exact counterparts to the English verbs "to purge" and "to redeem," and are used in a metaphorical as well as in a material sense. Not long ago the accomplice of two self-confessed murderers explained to the court before which they were being tried that the killing of a particular beast after the commission of the murder, according to the evidence adduced, was for the purpose of "cleansing the guilt from their hands."

Instances such as these show clearly that the root ideas of sacrifice and blood offering, either by way of appeasing the wrath of the departed spirits or to wash away the stains of sin (ukwona), are not wanting here. There is a striking resemblance indeed between this crude ceremony and the sacramental feasts of our own faith as

celebrated by the early church, in the solemnity and circumstance with which the natives partake of the meat of the slaughtered beast.

It seems impossible to deny that this worship of the dead, as here outlined, contains within itself the rudiments, though vague and uncertain they may be, of the doctrine of the communion of the saints according to Christian theology, and it might almost be said that all the main cardinal conceptions of our own highly-developed and elaborated religious systems have their prototypes, so to speak, in the religious ideas and observances of these people.

The " matshabe " dances of the Amakalanga, referred to rather contemptuously by the Matabele as " malombo," as practised to this day show evidence of coherent thought and analytical reasoning, elements so sadly lacking in all the Tebele traditions. These rites, which are entirely distinct from those of the " Ziwosana," are practised for the purpose of satisfying the ancestral spirits of those who believe their various afflictions to have been caused by these spirits, but a detailed description thereof is not possible here.

Clustering round these central notions of ancestor-worship is a mass of tangled and childish superstitions, in which dreams and omens and all the uncanny animals of the night play their part, and in which the natives believe as much and as little as did the European peasant of a hundred years ago.

The legend of the Chameleon and the Lizard still lingers among the Amandebele, and so does the story of the Lightning Bird. The former is found among all the Bantu people, but the version thereof varies in some important details among the different tribes, reaching its highest form among the Amanganja of Central Africa. With them it is said that God (Mulungu) sent first the Chameleon with a message of peace and good-will to the people upon earth, declaring that " they should not die, and that even if they died they should rise again." This tardy messenger, however, his gait being slow and feeble, delayed upon the way, and meanwhile the cunning lizard had been making mischief, as a result of which he was entrusted with a second and contrary message. This he carried with all speed, being quick and diligent by nature, and easily passed the chameleon on the way, and delivered himself thereof long before the chameleon arrived. The first message being binding, the doom of the people was sealed thereby. The Amandebele and the Amazulu have not preserved this curious legend in its entirety. They say simply, " The Chameleon was sent," but do not attempt to explain by whom. To this day when native girls find a chameleon crawling in the grass they honour this old tradition by seizing the poor reptile, and as they throw snuff into its hissing mouth they sing, " Wa u libeleni, wa u libeleni, nga ka si fanga alubana au libalanga " (why did you delay, oh ! why did you delay, had you not loitered so long we had not died). The

The bone-throwing witch doctor casts his bones on the ground before him, and by them divines the cause of the trouble about which he is consulted. The inflated bladder on his head seems to be as necessary to his "outfit" as the bauble was to the European "jester" of bygone days.

lizard is also regarded with aversion, but is seldom caught because of its wariness and quick movements.

The " Lightning Bird " (Inyoni ye zulu) or bird of the heavens, was the cause of thunder and lightning. Certain clever doctors were supposed to be able to snare this wonderful bird by their medicines, and when caught it was killed and made into further medicine wherewith to tame the fury of the elements. According to some accounts, its body was burned while the feathers were preserved, and though thus destroyed, it rose again phoenix-like from its ashes and flew away into its home in the clouds. The little dun-coloured bird called the " Inkanku " is also sometimes spoken of as the " Inyoni yezulu," but it is not credited with any supernatural powers, but is said to herald the coming of rain by the peculiar noise it then makes.

Those so-called or alleged supernatural practices, which are generally classed under the heading of witchcraft, do not perhaps, strictly speaking, come within the scope of this subject. Diviners there were in plenty, called variously " Zinyanga zo ku bula," " Izanuse " and " Izangoma " and " Zinyanga zamatambo." These last mentioned are still met with plying their trade, in spite of the heavy punishment awaiting them upon discovery. They pretend to see, in the way the bones or pieces of wood fall when thrown upon the ground, the cause of past and the course of future events, very much as the ancient soothsayers of Rome relied upon their observa-

tions of the flight of certain birds for similar purposes. The details of their craft have been circumstantially described elsewhere, and need not be given again here. These diviners, of whatever class they may be, are always shrewd and cunning persons, and generally of highly-strung temperaments and often inclined to hysteria, who play upon the gullibility of the natives the while they prey upon their victims in the time-honoured ways of impostors all round the world. The diviner who did not make use of bones and such-like implements, proceeded by way of making the enquirers gathered round him to " vuma " or assent by shouting and beating the ground at the end of each short sentence, in which he cast about for the facts of the case submitted to him. According to the vehemence, or lack thereof, in their assenting, he would gather the necessary facts, and would then pronounce his finding, which was always one of these two. Either the cause of the trouble lay with the " amadhlozi," and could be removed only by means of suitable sacrifices to them, or with some " umtakati " or evil-doer practising witchcraft (ukuloya) on his own account, who, when sufficiently clearly indicated, was himself removed with all possible despatch. This process of " ukunuka," or " smelling out," was always attended with drastic results, and its suppression by the British Government is undoubtedly one of the greatest blessings of the many which the natives have received under the new regime.

The " inyanga yokwelapa," that is, the doctor of healing

or " herbalist " pure and simple, is also often met with. Like the mediaeval leech, who surrounded his art with signs and symbols pointing to either satanic or supernatural origin, so the " Inyanga " of these parts depends largely upon the mystery in which his business is shrouded and the weirdness of his professional paraphernalia and appearance generally to impress those who seek his assistance. He realises instinctively that faith in the healer is the mainspring of the whole art of healing, whether practised through medicines or miracles.

The relation between religion and morality has always been a fruitful subject of controversy, and the question as to which is the cause of the other remains, and is likely to remain, for ever a matter of opinion. On the one side there is the theory of the existence of an innate moral sense unaffected by considerations of ultimate well-being and independent of religious sanction, and on the other the hypothesis of the categorical imperative of the practical reason as conducive to utility. These questions though interestingly obtrusive in the way of this discussion must not be allowed to arrest our attention here.

Though the natives undoubtedly possess a sense of morality and an ethical system of their own, it must be admitted that the sanction of their religion, such as it is, is not now required for the support of, or at least is never thought of, in connection with the moral laws governing their actions. When, for instance, the young people were instructed by their elders in former days in the

ways of life, the phrase commonly used was "Such and such a thing must not be done," and that was all. Nothing was said about the reason why certain acts were not allowed, or about the punishment to be meted out to those who disregarded the instructions of their teachers.

Offences such as adultery and incest were always held in abhorrence, but nothing now exists in the shape of a religious prohibition against these offences. Theft and robbery also were regarded more as the acts of a man insane or bewitched than as being deeds resulting from an evil disposition, and the offender was generally killed as quickly as might be. The idea of reward for the good and punishment for evildoers of a spiritual nature never entered the native's scheme of things at all.

Customs, nevertheless, are met with resembling so strongly those of other races possessing highly-developed religious systems that the observer is fain to believe that some kind of religious sanction must surely be found lying behind these observances, but it must be admitted that the natives themselves cannot give any cogent reasons for these practices. A case in point is that of the "Abalemba," who are a kind of lost tribe of natives living scattered about amongst other tribes, whose traditions forbid them to eat the meat of any animal not slaughtered by one of themselves and from which the blood has not been allowed to flow. The persistence with which they cling to this unwritten law, in the absence of any special religious ceremonial or tangible ritual sup-

porting and keeping it alive, is indeed marvellous. The reason given for the levitical statute of the ancient Jews, which is to the same effect as this tribal prohibition, "that the blood is the life," and, therefore, not to be eaten, if it was ever known to these people, has been forgotten, but the law itself stands, and is seldom broken, even under the strain of great temptation of hunger.

The customs of circumcision and of the purification of women, which are met with amongst native races, also show traces of semitic influence, but for these practices good and obvious reasons of hygienic considerations are recognised by the natives themselves, and no sanction or enforcement of a religious character is therefore needed to ensure their continued observance.

The practice of "ukuzila," or fasting and total abstinence from all work, by which, amongst some natives, the change of the moon was honoured, might perhaps be taken as furnishing the connection here sought. The reason for this observance was generally given as being the fear of destruction by hail-storms sent from above of the crops of those who failed to keep up this custom.

The so-called Phallic worship, with the lore of which many investigators have become, so to speak, obsessed, has led them to see traces of this cult where, in truth, none were to be found, but amongst these people at any rate, that is the Matabele, no sign thereof can be said to exist. Amongst the Amakalanga, on the other hand, some very peculiar customs, which are still followed, would seem to

point to a time when the emblems of generation were venerated and worshipped as such.

Of animism, that tendency so common among primitive people which leads to the deifying or spiritualising of inanimate objects, no evidence can be shown here, but the Amakalanga have a habit savouring of this bent of mind, which they exhibit when big trees are cut down, when they may be seen to place little garlands of grass upon the stump that remains standing, mumbling the while some appropriate words of style.

No description of any religion, however primitive, can claim to be exhaustive without touching upon the aesthetic element contained therein, but to do so here would constitute a parenthesis too long for our present space.

We have seen how the Matabele came to this country devoid of any higher form of religion than the primitive ancestor-worship of the Amazulu, and how, when the white people appeared and intercepted their national progress, the more highly-developed religion of the Amakalanga was already beginning to attract and assimilate the Amandebele element into itself. Whether the level reached by the Amakalanga, when these people first came under the European observation, was one marking their progress from ancestor-worship to the worship of one God, or a falling away from a former faith of a higher order, is a question that remains unanswered for the present. This much is known with certainty. The Amakalanga, in common with many of the races living in

latitudes north of this country, believe in and, in a sense, worship one God, but this worship is always conducted by numbers of people together and for one common object, namely, rain, for the good of the crops of the people in need thereof. Prayer to God by one man by himself and for himself, for either rain or any other favour, blessing or help is seldom heard of. By way of showing how seldom, the following instance, which is the only one of its kind that has ever come under the notice of the writer, may be given. While travelling down the Zambesi once, and trying to negotiate a dangerous part thereof, the canoe (dug-out) was swept into one of the many eddies so plentiful in that river, and was whirled round and round. One of the two boatmen, who had never been under missionary influence, realising our helplessness, called out in a loud voice with his face turned to the sky, " Leza, Leza, Leza." Then when, curiously enough, the boat glided safely through the danger spot and the man was asked to explain the meaning of his cries, he first appeared to be ashamed of himself and would say nothing, but afterwards, upon being pressed for an answer, he admitted that, being sore afraid, he had called upon his God for help.

The personal element of the old Hebrew faith and other religions showing out so strongly in the earliest records has as yet hardly dawned here. The natives are communistic even in their religion. For a man to think of himself as the object of divine favour, individually and

apart from his tribe, would seem to them impossible and absurd. When this mental attitude is understood, it is easy to see how difficult and how slow the progress of acquiring our own highly individualised religious ideas must be for a people to whom the idea of individualism itself is still new and strange. And now the question may fairly be asked as to what is the nett result of this and similar enquiries into the religious element discoverable amongst the natives of this country. One answer at least may be given without fear of contradiction, namely, this, that the more we know about the ways of life and thought of the people we are called upon to govern, the better shall we be able to avoid making mistakes in our treatment of them. Their religion, such as it is, indicates a stage of human development which our forefathers traversed a thousand years ago. This fact alone ought to make us beware of giving too freely of the strong meat of western civilisation and religion to a race which, according to the known rate of human progress, requires yet many centuries to develop the necessary capacity therefor.

The man depicted here is of the class known as the "Abenhla," that is, people who were subdued and brought along by the Zulus on their northward journey from the coast.

PN.

III

THE MAN HIMSELF.

MAN, whether black or white, is known by his works, but even primitive man cannot do much without words. Very often, indeed, his words are his works, and without them there is little to show of either good or bad. To know the native of Africa is to know his language, that is, to understand his words and to know how he uses them, as well as to know how and what he does and leaves undone in the way of his daily life.

It is hardly possible in considering rude and uncivilised communities like the Matabele, wholly to avoid the fascinating study of origins which lies athwart the very threshold, so to speak, of all inquiries into the early history and present conditions of a savage people. Many questions obtrude themselves and arrest the attention. Are these people, we ask, the descendants of a higher race possessing in their day a more specialised language and a higher degree of civilisation generally, or are they even now advancing, though very slowly, from a lower to a higher plane of human culture? Was it the spoken word of his present language that first stirred the Kaffir's feeble spirit beyond his belly-need, or was it the spirit itself that

groped in the sluggish brain of his primeval ancestor till it struck the chords that sounded sense and fashioned forth immortal speech ? We need not attempt to answer these questions here. They are for the anthropologist to solve, and his science is only yet in its infancy. In searching for their answers we become involved in speculations that were rife long before St. John the Evangelist composed his treatise on "The Word" that was in the beginning. This much we know, that conscious perception cannot exist without language and can only grow with the growth of language. The languages of the Bantu people, of which the Matabele form but one section of a group, do not furnish us with anything new or illuminating in the way of assistance towards the solution of the problem of origin of the human mind. These languages, uncivilised though they may be, are nevertheless exceedingly well developed in many directions, and show plainly that their owners are very far removed from the level of the early savage as conjectured by modern scientists.

Nevertheless, the present native's language forms a very valuable index to all the rest of him, for if it is found that many words which are necessary for the conveyance of certain ideas amongst other people are wanting here, then it is fair to assume that these ideas are either wholly absent or are not yet clearly recognised. In this way the man's language becomes a means of measuring the mind of the man himself.

The language of the Matabele is the same as that which is called Zulu. Such slight differences as there may be are purely dialectical and quite unimportant. It is immensely rich in verbs, and correspondingly poor in nouns capable of expressing the highly specialised derivative abstractions of civilised languages. But the rudiments are there no less than in those Teutonic tongues that, unlike English, discarded the aid of Greek and Latin, and developed their own terminology of subtle and abstract conceptions.

It is, indeed, surprising that the African native, ever since he entered the arena of history, should have been practically innocent of thought in the European sense of the word, seeing that his language, whichever Bantu group it may belong to, is admittedly a potentially fine vehicle for articulate communication. Whether the African of to-day will ever prove capable of developing this great latent talent, which for ages past has lain buried in the gloom of savage indolence, is a question which must needs await its answer for some considerable time to come.

It were of little use to attempt here a detailed description of this language. Those who desire to become acquainted therewith may do so through the books of grammar, of which there are several in the market. One thing must be borne in mind by the would-be student. There is no royal road to its acquisition any more than there is to the learning of any other language, ancient or

modern. When the rules of grammar and construction have been mastered there remain those myriads of idioms so provoking in their looseness and endless variations. It would probably be fair to estimate its vocabulary to consist of not less than 30,000 words. The onomatopoetic element, though present, does not preponderate. The language is exceedingly vivid but sadly lacking in exactitude. From the point of view of practical gain it may be asked whether it is worth while for the average non-official white man to learn it. This, at least, is fairly certain, that the knowledge acquired will not, as a rule, serve to raise the native in the learner's esteem. As he becomes more and more familiar with the native speech the student learns to appraise more correctly the true character of the native himself, and seeing that the elements of what we call character are in the native conspicuous rather by their absence, the student's estimate of the man whose language he is studying is apt to sink in proportion to the growth of the knowledge of his subject. But if there be lack of esteem there is the corresponding gain of accurate knowledge, and the devil we know is better than the devil we did not know, or knew only in the disguise of our own fond imagination. When, for instance, the European, having acquired some degree of fluency in the native language, finds himself struggling with the task of conveying to an unsatisfactory native servant the necessity for such virtues as honour, honesty, fairness, justice, and gratitude, and this without any single word that in itself

The men are great drinkers. The amount of Kaffir beer that an average native can consume in a day is incredibly large. A favourite saying is this, *Isisu a si la tambo*, which is to the effect that the stomach being boneless is capable of great distension.

will serve as an equivalent for these essential elements in the white man's scheme of things, it is not to be wondered at that the good intentions of the erstwhile well-wisher are apt to become changed into more lasting indifference or contempt.

I remember once that I tried to show to a native how utterly cowardly and unmanly the African's way of striking a man when he is down appeared to the average white man. My attempt was not successful. " If I do not strike my enemy when he is on the ground," said this exponent of the accepted native view of the matter, " then it may be that he rises and knocks me down, therefore, we say, strike him hard when he is down lest he overtakes you while you are still close by and gains the day." Bravery, as a virtue apart from ruthless cruelty, is an idea not yet generally evolved. " Isibindi " is at once the word for " liver " and for callous indifference to the feelings of others, and forms perhaps the nearest verbal approach to the English " courage." " Conscience " is rendered by the missionaries by the word " uvalo," which really means nothing more than excessive physical fear. " Honour," as apart from the idea of shame, expressed in the verb " hlonipa " has not yet been given a fixed word for itself. Gratitude, though not perhaps entirely unknown, is a phenomenon seldom observed apart from the case where it is a patent and lively anticipation of favours to come. The conception of goodness as distinguished from pleasant or pretty appearances is also lacking. The expression

" umuntu omuhle " may mean indifferently a good or a handsome man, and " umuntu ulungile " may mean both that the man is good or tractable, or that he is just and righteous according to the context in which the words are used. But not only is this paucity of specialised words a hindrance when it is desired to convey the meaning of such abstract conceptions as these mentioned, but it is felt even where the occasion calls for a verbal description of such practical attributes as roundness, height as distinguished from length, youth as apart from greenness or freshness. Now as nearly everything a Kaffir makes is always more or less round in shape, it can hardly be said that roundness is unknown because of the absence of a specific word wherewith to describe it, and yet it may well be that the geometrical difference between the circle of a hut and the square of a sleeping mat has never materialised in his intelligence.

Again, the slowness that is so painfully apparent to the white man in everything a Kaffir does is seldom recognised by the Kaffir himself. The adjective slow can be expressed only by saying " little by little " or " go nicely " or negatively by saying " don't hurry." There is no distinct word for slow in the language. Yet no one will deny the native's profound indifference to the value of time.

In the same way may it not be that the rudiments of virtue and of higher thought lie buried only but not dead? The native, as is well known, is averse to any process of

mental analysis; he hates hard thinking as the devil is said to hate the water that is holy. Hitherto he has been all talk and there has been very little real thinking. Whether it will ever be otherwise with him, it is impossible to say. Meanwhile, the lack of definite words, like those here instanced, is a constant hindrance to his mental growth, as well as a continual cause of annoyance to the white man who has to deal personally with him. A single instance of the often unavoidable results of this verbal inadequacy will suffice to show the intimate connection between language and character. The locative form of the Zulu or Sindebele noun is formed by adding a certain common ending to the word which does duty for most of our prepositions, such as, at, in, on, to, from, by and with. Thus the locative of the word indhlu, hut or house, is formed by saying "endhlini," which may mean at, in, on, to, from, by and with the hut according to the context. It is obvious enough that such vagueness affords convenient shelter to the speaker who, intentionally or not, gives an inaccurate account of any event or particular state of things whenever he is charged with speaking false. Take the witness in a Court of Law. He may say, for instance, that "he saw the accused *endhlini*," which may mean that he saw him either in, on or about the hut in question. Now, when afterwards it becomes apparent that this witness has been lying in the witness box, and it is sought to charge him with the crime of perjury, it will often be found extremely difficult to prove which of

the various relations or positions expressed was really meant by him at the time.

But if he is short of words wherewith to utter the values of verity, the excellence of virtue and the beauty of holiness, his " gift of the gab," as developed in the opposite direction, is admitted on all hands to be almost superhuman, or, as some think, satanic in its surpassing completeness.

It follows, therefore, that this language, being of the very essence of the native's whole existence, is, by reason of its looseness and inexactitude, of necessity conducive to shiftiness of conduct as well as to the opposite of truth and precision in actual speech.

The true relation of cause and effect is here, as everywhere, a matter for endless speculation. Whether the man's language is the product of his pre-existing mind, or whether it served to create or evolve that mind are problems proper for the psychologist though interesting enough to all. One thing is certain, that, whether through the exigencies of his language or by his inherent predisposition, the native is, as a general rule, a glib and cheerful liar. His continued development of this, his most prominent characteristic at the present time, is due, in a great measure, to the " softness " of the average white man who allows the Kaffir to assume that his perversions have proved successful, whether such is the case or not. " The white man looked suspicious when I told him that tale," he muses, " but he must have believed it after all," and he

congratulates himself upon his prowess as a prevaricator, and afterwards raises storms of applause when he recounts his feat to the admiring circle of friends and pupils at home. There are, of course, bunglers in every trade, but, speaking generally, the average native is highly proficient in the art of mendacity and able to "measure words" with the average Asiatic, of whom the royal psalmist of Holy Writ, himself an Asiatic, declared that they were all liars. The old French proverb, "on lie les bœufs par les cornes et les hommes par les paroles," has no meaning for the African natives, who never fasten their cattle by the horns, nor ever bind themselves by their words. The binding force of a promise is something but vaguely understood, and the nature of a contractual obligation is seldom apprehended by the raw native.

Hope, we are told, springs eternal in the human breast, and one may still meet some enthusiasts amongst the missionaries who endeavour to inculcate the love of truth amidst the natives of Africa, but the great majority of responsible white people, whether friendly disposed towards the natives or not, are agreed that David's statement, as applied to the sons of Ham, is correct, and that their condition, being hopelessly chronic, is beyond repair.

Although the native is by common consent a born liar, he is not, as might perhaps be expected, by nature a thief. The hasty assimilation of the white man's civilisation is undoubtedly producing a great deal of mental and moral indigestion, resulting in all kinds of crime, but it

must not be forgotten that the vices that follow the white man into heathen countries, bad though they often be, are tame compared to the daily acts of wanton cruelty and unbridled ferocity with which the strong violated the weak all over Africa before the light of civilisation dawned upon that dark continent.

When temptation offers, the Kaffir often becomes a thief, but there need be no occasion for him to lie at all, and yet he will do so for the sheer love of the thing. According to his lights lying is at most a venial sin, whereas thieving is an infringement of another's right to the possession of his goods, but when a man lies or perverts the truth, there has been no tangible violation of another's person or property, and, therefore, no wrong has been done. The native view is in accordance with that of English law: "mere lying is not actionable," but the natives go further and allow no moral compunction to interfere with the free play of this their cherished vice. Their way of thinking is not dissimilar to that of the complacent Jesuit who defined a lie as the withholding of the truth from one who had a right to know it. But whereas this definition presumes that someone does possess a right to the absolute truth, the natives, now that their own kings are no more, no longer consider themselves under any obligation of speaking the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Under those kings a very efficient system of espionage made the withholding of the truth where the supreme chief was concerned a very dangerous

matter indeed, besides which there was also undoubtedly a kind of conscientious disposition towards and in favour of the royal element, which made lying against it a crime akin to that called perjury by the English.

Before the white man came there was practically no such thing as private ownership, from which it follows that there could be little crime in the way of fraud and theft, whereas, as has been pointed out, the language was always loose and vague, and therefore conducive to equivocation rather than to singleness and truth.

It is by enumerating first the vices of the man that we may clear the line of vision for a consideration of his better qualities afterwards. Generally, then, it may be said, that the native is often vicious but seldom vindictive. The strain involved in sustaining the feeling of resentment first engendered is contrary to his naturally supine temperament. Long continued hatred, therefore, is seldom met with, indeed it is a common experience to find natives remaining cheerfully in the service of a hard-hitting master, while the mild and indulgent employer often finds it difficult to obtain the labour he requires. Occasionally inclined to thieving, the Kaffir is not naturally avaricious. Gullible sometimes, he is usually cunning enough to hold his own when bargaining with a white man. Impudence and suspicion, the twin products of ignorance and sloth, are met with on every hand. Disinterested goodness and natural generosity are things always regarded as signs of fear, or are put down to a desire on the part of the giver

to ingratiate himself with the recipient. Take as an example of this peculiar suspiciousness the native who has made his annual pilgrimage in search of work for the purpose of paying the unavoidable poll tax. He has trudged a long way and, coming into the town of his destination, he sees a white man standing in the doorway of his house. The white man and the house both look good and reliable to the native, and he decides to go up and ask for work. Now, it so happens that before he has brought out his request, the white man makes him an offer of congenial employment with good pay. The native has no occasion whatever for doubts or fears, but he at once becomes suspicious. The white man has offered him something good without being asked therefor. There must be something wrong. He shakes his head, walks off and hires himself to another master, and for less wages, further on. Similarly, to raise a Kaffir's wages often has the opposite result to that desired by the over-appreciative employer.

Sexual immorality, especially that form which is accompanied with violence, is exceedingly common. This aspect of the native's character has already been touched upon in the previous article dealing with customs generally.

But the cardinal vice, the *fons et origo*, of all that is evil in the Kaffir, is undoubtedly his inborn and ineradicable sloth. That incurable idleness is only temporarily disturbed now and then by the peremptory calls of stern necessity, calls that, unfortunately for all concerned, are

heard far less often in Africa than in other lands. It is not removed or even diminished, it is only disturbed. The white man's lust for enterprise and dominion over the elements of nature is absolutely foreign to the native. When the Kaffir works, it is because he is forced thereto and not because he finds his idleness to be irksome. A change in the native's form of government and his conditions generally has already been more or less accomplished, but to change his nature from its love of indolence to that of the normal white man, to whom idleness is intolerable, will be a matter of centuries, if indeed it will ever be achieved.

And now as to the other and brighter side of the man. There are many, of course, who deny the existence of any good qualities in the native, and it must be admitted that most of his good points do not appear at first sight, but come to light only after he has been put under some sort of discipline. Discipline and subordination are admitted to be indispensable to the formation of character. The native of to-day who leads an otiose and care-free existence in his kraal knows no discipline, wherefore he soon sinks below the level at which he once stood, and to which he may perhaps again be raised. In bygone days the inhabitants of South Africa were, roughly speaking, divided into two classes, the hunters and the hunted. The menfolk were not as idle as they now are. The strain involved, alike in catching and in avoiding being caught, supplied the necessary incentives to action, and a rude

form of discipline was required in either case. Amongst those natives who, before the white man appeared, had attained to anything like dominance over their neighbours, discipline was rigorously upheld with a very real rod of iron, the ever-ready assegai always red with the blood of defaulters. To-day the native's only hope lies in subjection to discipline, and not in being artificially elevated to levels of equality with men whose inherent superiority is of age-long acquisition. The white man has secured the native in the safety of life, limb, and property, without asking for any effort on his part, and the result has been that the latter's fibre generally has been weakened and loosened.

Amenability to being governed is one of the most noticeable traits of native character. The African loves authority, he respects only the master who is master. He has all the natural man's contempt for gentleness, which he calls weakness, in those placed above him. What poetry there is amongst the natives is contained chiefly in the " izibongo " of their chiefs, and it leaves out entirely all those gentler attributes of love and mercy which evoke the admiration of the civilised mind. Take, for instance, the list of royal appellations that used to be vociferously chanted in honour to Lo Bengula. He was hailed as the flame that burned up the sorcerers, the power that destroyed alike the married and the unmarried when doomed in his wrath. The nearest approach to the idea of justice lay in such words as these : " wa juba imiti kwa sala

The first step in the native's "upward march" is the white man's hat. The second a coat. Trousers are a luxury that only the more ambitious people aspire to. This drawing is of a "Hole," that is, a slave or bondsman of the inferior class in the second or trouserless stage of civilisation.

izipunzi," "thou cuttest down the trees (the parents) but the sprouts from the roots (the children) remain," as showing his kingly clemency in the destruction of the parents only, and not in always "wiping out" the infants of the condemned family as well.[1]

Gentleness of disposition is not, as a rule, admired, and is often described as stupidity. An ox, for instance, that happens to be free from any vice, is generally referred to as the "isituta," the fool of the span. Conversely, the word "ukuzonda," though no doubt it contains, or rather serves to convey, the idea of hatred, is as a matter of fact used by the natives to denote ill-will arising, not from ill-treatment suffered or from injury received, but as being the feeling which anyone who is naturally maliciously inclined entertains, without any express cause therefor, towards another. Severity and even cruelty on the part of the chief or master do not, as a rule, call forth feelings of hatred or the desire of retaliation in those who are under him. Occasionally a vindictive native may be found, but he is an exception to the general rule.

Hospitality was at one time an almost universal virtue amongst the natives, but it was always strictly confined to members of the same tribe. It was the kind of charity which not only began but stayed religiously at home. A stranger was an enemy, and he seldom met with anything

[1] The same idea is latent in the phrase found in Cetshwayo's "isibongo": "Umondhli wezinkedama zabantu," "the nourisher of the orphans of the people," but it must not be forgotten that having killed the parents, these orphans were of his own making.

better than suspicion and the cold shoulder. The tendency nowadays is towards greater tolerance for all comers, and also towards more mercenary methods in the treatment of the guest, whether alien or not.

Courage also is often met with in the native, who, as a rule, is not troubled with "nerves." Honesty, exclusive of the natural lust of lying already referred to, is not uncommon, but requires here, more than where the element of conscience has been slowly developed, the strong arm of the law to support it, when circumstances occur which make it appear, in spite of the sweeping dictum of the copy book, to be not the best policy.

Turning now from the moral aspect of our subject to glance at the purely mental side of the man, it must be confessed that there is not much to be seen.

The so-called mystery of the native mind lies not in the depth or complexity of the black man's cerebral processes, but appears as such to the average European who, having inherited a mind trained during many generations to think analytically, and in accordance with the observed laws of cause and effect, cannot understand the strange absence of any reason for so much of what the native says and does. Though the idea of causation is not altogether wanting, it is as yet only faintly recognised. To follow the impulsions of one cause upon another requires a certain amount of mental strain for which the average native has no inclination.

The African is also a born fatalist. The expression

" lilanga lami," " my day has come," is always on the lips of the man who finds himself in trouble, whether it be of his own manifest making or not. When a native is found guilty of a serious crime, he may often be heard to say that it was not he himself who did the deed, but that it was his heart which prompted and compelled him to do it. He seems to recognise a sort of occasional detachment of his own will from his other and proper ego. To what system of speculation this particular form of dualism is to be relegated, I leave the philosophic reader to decide. The subject of Free-Will is too thorny a matter even to merely touch upon in passing.

Take him all round, the native of Africa is disappointing in every way. He has not been stinted in natural gifts. Bodily health and strength have been his in a very fair measure, but a deep sleep overtook him early in his racial career, and he has never yet attempted to shake off his age-long slumbers. History at least has no record of any such attempt. Will he do so now when the light of civilisation is lighting up all the dark places in which he has slept so long? The answer cannot be given now. Those who know him well do not anticipate a speedy awakening, and knowing, as they do, that his will is weak though his body may be strong, they see no need to fear him as a competitor with the white man in any of the higher walks of life for many a long day to come.

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